



Alaska Department of Health  
and Social Services

## 2020 Title V Needs Assessment Summary June 2020



### Children + Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHCN)

The Title V Maternal and Child Health Services Block Grant Program promotes and improves the health and well-being of Alaska's mothers, children, young adults and families. Every five years, states are required to conduct a statewide, comprehensive needs assessment which serves as a strategic planning and resource allocation tool. States survey the community and review data in order to select priority areas to focus their work for the 5-year grant cycle. Below is a summary of needs assessment findings and priority areas for Alaska's CYSHCN population.

#### Strengths + Successes

##### Help Me Grow Program

The 2015 Needs Assessment noted navigation between siloed healthcare, social services, and educational systems is a major obstacle for CYSHCN. Since then, the Title V program has collaborated with partners to develop and support the Help Me Grow program, a referral system that connects children and their families with needed services.

##### Medical Homes

43.7% of CYSHCN have a medical home, just above the national average of 42.7%.<sup>1</sup>

##### Family Engagement

The Title V program has a strong commitment to family engagement and leadership. The program supports Family Navigation staff and training for those working directly with families accessing care. Family Engagement training develops parent and family skills needed to participate in healthcare planning, development, and implementation at the individual, community and policy level.



“I am impressed with the resources dedicated to special needs children in rural areas (such as extra teacher's assistants, etc.)” and “...providing special needs services for infants and children through various programs.” – Needs assessment survey respondents

## Challenges, Gaps, + Needs

- In 2017-2018, 17.8% (32,994) of Alaska’s children had special health care needs.<sup>1</sup>
- In 2017, 6.2% of mothers reported that their 3-year-old child is limited in his or her ability to do things most children of the same age can do, compared to 4.0% reporting this in 2015.<sup>2</sup>

In 2017-2018, 30.7% of CYSHCN ages 0-17 were not continuously and adequately insured.<sup>1</sup>

- In 2017-2018, 77.3% of Alaskan youth with special health care needs (ages 12-17) did not receive services necessary for transition to adult health care.<sup>1</sup>



“Kids with special needs need access to home based care even in rural areas!”

– Needs assessment survey respondent

The needs assessment prioritized three areas to address for the CYSHCN population:

### Access to Medical Care and Access to Specialty Pediatric Care

Access issues remain the primary concern for CYSHCN.

- In Alaska, 82.4% of children with special health care needs aged 0-17 do not receive care in a well-functioning system.<sup>1</sup>
- A growing percentage of Alaskan children are experiencing complex health needs. Alaskan families of CYSHCN face many challenges:
  - Children with complex needs often must travel out of state for specialty care.
  - Rural communities have limited access to preventive, acute, and specialty care.
  - Rural areas of the state lack local providers and turnover of health care staff reduces continuity in care.

### Behavioral and Mental Health Problems

Only 59.4 % of Alaska children ages 3-17 with a mental/behavioral condition are receiving treatment and counseling.<sup>1</sup>

### Child Abuse and Neglect

Alaskan CYSHCN and their families have a higher risk of death, child abuse and neglect, being in foster care, and inadequate planning for emergency needs. Children in foster care often have complicated and serious medical, mental health, developmental, oral health, and psychosocial problems rooted in their history of childhood trauma.<sup>3</sup>

“We need access to mental health assessment, treatment, services, and parent training and support groups.”

– Needs assessment survey respondent

## Title V Priorities for 2020-2024

Increase the number of children who are living in safe, stable, nurturing environments.

Reduce substance misuse (including alcohol, tobacco and drugs) among caregivers of infants and toddlers and women of childbearing age.

Increase or promote equitable access to medical and pediatric specialty care and family supports for Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs (CYSHCN).

Increase safe and healthy relationships.

Increase connection to behavioral and mental health information, training and resources for parents and caregivers, and providers who serve women, adolescents, and children.

Improve social supports, with a focus on wellbeing and resilience, to prevent and reduce the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

Strengthen systems, services and partnerships to help families and health care providers respond to the impact of a collective emergency, disaster or other trauma.

## Key Strategies

To address the challenges, gaps and needs that were highlighted during the needs assessment, the State of Alaska's Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health developed strategies to guide actions for the next five years. A few key strategies are listed below. The complete strategy list is included in the 2020-2024 Title V Five-Year State Action Plan, which will be available on the [Alaska Title V website](#) once finalized.

- Develop resources for adolescents to learn independence skills for healthcare needs and transitioning to adult care, and increase education to adolescents, their caregivers, educators, and medical providers on this topic.
- Partner with tribal health and UAA Center for Human Development to implement Project ECHOs to increase caregiver and provider knowledge and skills.
- Reduce gaps and barriers to specialty care by supporting expanded tele-health solutions.

The Title V Administrative Agency in Alaska is the Section of Women's, Children's and Family Health, located in the Department of Health and Social Services.

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## References

1. National Survey of Children's Health, 2017-2018
2. Alaska Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey, 2015-2017
3. Pediatrics. Health Care Issues for Children and Adolescents in Foster Care and Kinship Care, October 2015